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FM AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5441  
INFO RUCNCOM/EC CARICOM COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS PRIORITY 1794  
RUMIAAA/HQ USSOUTHCOM J2 MIAMI FL PRIORITY  
RUMIAAA/HQ USSOUTHCOM J5 MIAMI FL PRIORITY  
RUEHCV/USDAO CARACAS VE PRIORITY

UNCLAS BRIDGETOWN 001168

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SOUTHCOM ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: ST LUCIA PRIME MINISTER JOHN COMPTON PASSES AWAY

1. Prime Minister of St. Lucia Sir John Compton passed away on September 7 from a series of strokes and other complications. He was 82 years old. Compton led St. Lucia to independence from the United Kingdom in 1979, becoming the island state's first prime minister. He also served as Premier of St. Lucia from 1967 to 1979 pre-independence, then as prime minister in 1979, again from 1982 to 1996, and then from December 2006 until his passing. He came out of retirement in 2005 to lead his United Workers Party (UWP) to victory in the December 2006 elections. Compton's funeral is tentatively scheduled for September 22.

2. Acting Prime Minister Stephenson King was appointed prime minister on September 9. King served as acting prime minister since May 2007 when Compton became too ill to actively lead the country. He is expected to announce his cabinet in the next couple days.

3. Various press reports claim that two UWP members of parliament were hesitant to back King as prime minister. According to these reports, Rufus Bousquet, who Compton fired from his position as foreign minister, attempted to trade his vote for a position back in cabinet. Marcus Nicholas, who was relieved of his cabinet position when appointed deputy speaker of parliament, is also alleged to have demanded a cabinet position and the firing of Ausbert d'Auvergne, an appointed Senator who served as Minister for Economic Affairs, Economic Planning, National Development, and the Public Service under Compton. D'Auvergne is widely considered one of the most brilliant planners in government, but also ethically dubious. He has a reputation for being an autocrat and is considered by many as having too much power for an appointed official. As of yet, Post has not heard any reports as to whether these concessions were met.

4. A by-election for Compton's seat must be held within 90 days. However, there will be no need for national elections because, according to the Constitution, the Governor General appoints as Prime Minister from among the existing seat holders the member of parliament who appears to command the support of the majority of parliament.

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